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Immediate Release

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Drilling Restriction Imposed During Albuquerque Superfund Clean Up

(Santa Fe, NM) — At the request of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer has issued an order, effective July 31, 2003, to prohibit the drilling of new wells or the transfer of water rights to existing wells within the Fruit Avenue Plume Superfund Site in Albuquerque.

This interim action is designed to protect residents of the area while active remediation is being planned and implemented. Currently, no municipal wells are known to have been impacted by contamination from the site. Active remediation is currently projected to begin in late 2004.

“We are pleased that work is commencing to get this site cleaned up,” said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. “In the long run, active remediation will ensure that both area residents and water resources are protected. In the short term, this drilling restriction ensures that no one will be harmed while we work to get this water cleaned up.”

Although contamination from the site currently poses no immediate health risks, this order will safeguard the public from contact with ground water that contains trichloroethene (TCE) concentrations above EPA-established health-based standards. This ground water contamination has caused the closure of 2 private water supply wells within the Superfund site. Without active remediation, two municipal water supply wells that lie within the path of ground water flow could become contaminated in the future.

The area affected by this order underlies a portion of downtown Albuquerque, and is roughly bounded by Lomas Boulevard to the north, Sixth Street to the west, Tijeras Avenue to the south, and Elm Street to the east. The TCE pollution at the site originated from a dry-cleaning business once located in the downtown area.

The Fruit Avenue Plume Superfund Site is one of ten sites nationwide that recently were awarded funding by the EPA for remedial action under Superfund legislation. The EPA authorized the expenditure of \$4 million to begin remediation of ground water and localized areas of soil that are contaminated principally with TCE.

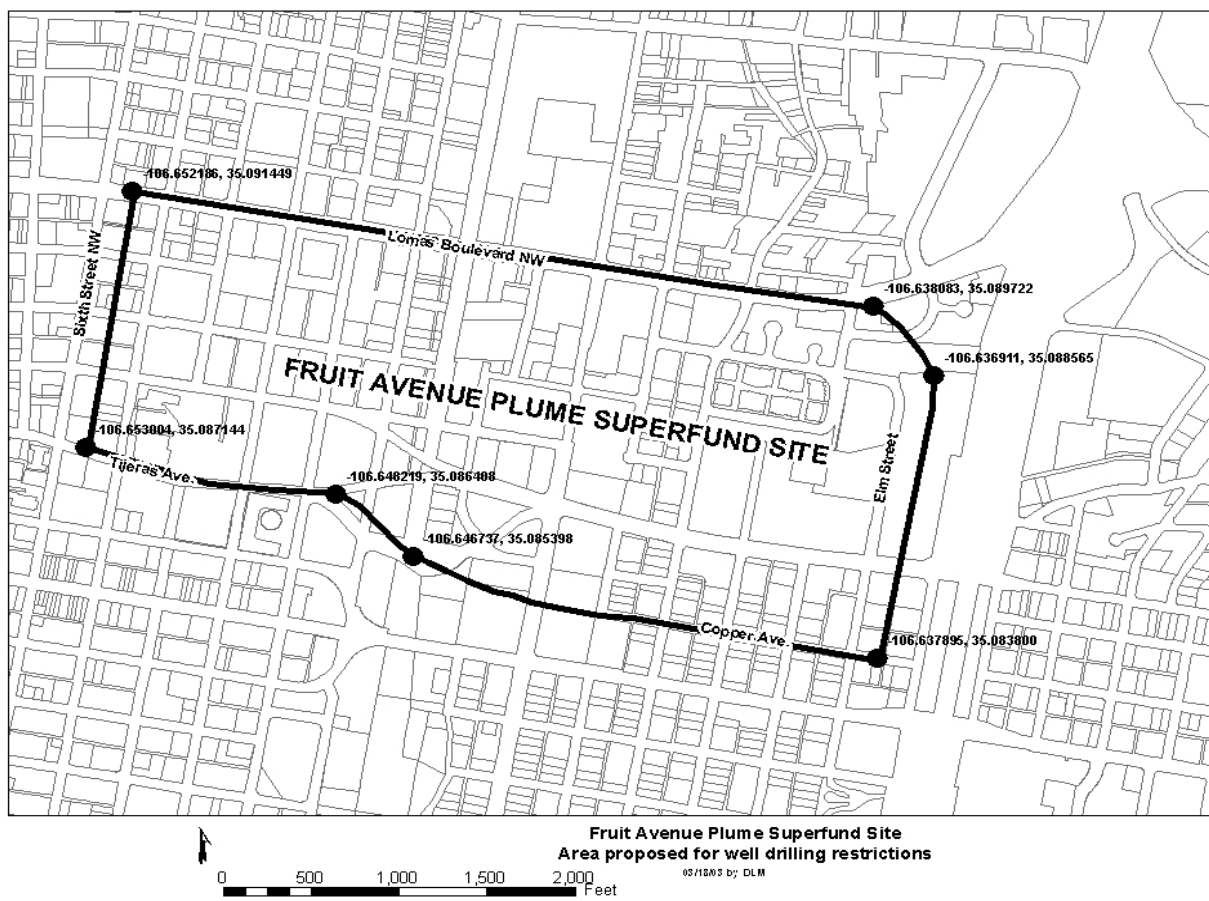
The drilling restrictions will remain in effect throughout the duration of site remedial activities.

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Fruit Ave. Drilling Restrictions

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